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ROSATI'S ELEVATION TO SEE OF ST. LOUIS

(1827)

A Pastoral Letter addressed by Bishop Dubourg to the priests of Louisiana advised them of the appointment of a Coadjutor, and the coming auspicious event of the latter's consecration. The wish of the prelate was that this ceremony should mark an historical date in the annals of the Diocese. As a place suitable for the ceremony, and easy to reach by the greatest possible number of priests, he appointed the church of the Ascension at Donaldsonville; the twenty-fifth of March, feast of the Annunciation, he deemed an ideal day: it falling that year on a Thursday, the clergy of the neighborhood—as neighborhood was accounted in those times—were able to come and go back without depriving their flocks of the Sunday Mass.¹

Bishop-elect Rosati left the "Barrens" on Saturday, January 31, 1824, *hyeme maxime saeviente*,² for St. Genevieve, where he expected to take a southbound boat. But the waters of the Mississippi were drifting huge ice floes, and the traveller had to wait three whole weeks for a conveyance, "enjoying meanwhile the company of his confrère, Father F. X. Dahmen, C.M., pastor of St. Genevieve."³ Finally, on Saturday, February 21, a boat was announced, and the next morning, after an early Mass, he commenced his voyage.

It was his first journey to the Southland, and a tedious and toilsome one it proved, particularly at the outset. The water was low; in consequence no less than five times did the craft run into sand-bars, and twelve full days were required to cover the 140 miles between St. Genevieve and the mouth of the Ohio.⁴

The latter spot no doubt stirred in Bishop Rosati vivid memories of past hardships and blessings. Five years had scarcely elapsed since (September, 1818), with his twenty-three companions, he huddled on a small leaky flatboat, descended the

¹ The letter of Bishop Dubourg is not extant, but the gist of it is given by Bishop Rosati in a letter to Father Baccari, March 29, 1824.

² *Diary*, Under above date.

³ Letter to Father Baccari, March 29, 1824.

⁴ *Diary*, February 22, March 4.

"Beautiful River"; there, on the Missouri shore, was the place where they landed, and waited ten long days for horses to take them to the "Barrens"; there, after their scanty provisions were consumed, they stared hunger in the face; there, too, they for the first time in the Louisiana Diocese performed spiritual and corporal works of mercy in behalf of a family of Tennessean emigrants famished, half-naked and destitute of everything; there, on the desert bank of the river, under a canopy of boughs and foliage, Mass and Vespers were sung on September 27, anniversary of the death of St. Vincent de Paul, and to crown the day, baptism was administered to five children of these poor Tennesseans.⁵ The apostolic hero of the day, the saintly Father Andrew Ferrari, had now gone to receive his reward: stricken with yellow fever, he had breathed his last in New Orleans on November 2, 1822. Fain would Father Rosati have tarried an hour to tread once more the sand of this lonely river bank, seek the shattered remnants of the rustic altar, and kneel down at the place where he had celebrated Mass for the first time on Missouri soil. But thanks to the brimful Ohio, the Mississippi was again the "Father of Waters," promising the much overdue craft a speedy completion of her journey; and soon the winter mist screened from the lingering gaze of the traveller the spot hallowed by holy memories.

A week later, March 11, *ad multam noctem*, he landed at Donaldsonville and was received with open arms by the Pastor, Father Hercules Brassac. Two days after, he went across the river to tender his respects to Bishop Dubourg, just arrived from New Orleans and staying at the home of one of his nephews, nine miles from Donaldsonville; and, this duty performed, retired to Assumption, the home of his friend, Father Bigeschi, and of his young confrère Father Tichitoli, to prepare himself by a spiritual retreat (March 14–21) for his episcopal consecration. Then, driving by a roundabout way, he paid a short visit to the priests of the neighborhood: old Father Bernard de Devas,⁶

⁵ ROSATI, *Sketch of the Life of Father Ferrari*. MS. *Archives of the Proc. Gen. C. M.*, Rome. *America*, P. II. *Append.*, pp. 173–174.

⁶ Formerly Pastor of St. Martin of the Attakapas, and, later, of the Assumption; was then retired from active duty.

Father Potini⁷ and Father Rosti,⁸ C.M., in charge of the parish of St. Joseph (Thibodeaux, La.); and with them returned to Donaldsonville on Wednesday, March 24. Bishop Dubourg and a number of the neighboring clergy had already arrived. The beautiful brick church of the Ascension⁹ had donned its festive attire. Everything was in readiness. At sunset the roar of the mortar and the joyful peals of the church bell announced to all the surrounding country the morrow's solemnity. Then from every corner of the parish, far and near, issued forth as by magic the sound of hundreds of pipes, bugles, horns "and of all kinds of music," to serenade in good creole fashion the welcome guest.

On the morning of the twenty-fifth, a great crowd of people from Donaldsonville and from many miles around, eager to witness the unprecedented ceremony which they most likely were never to see again, thronged the church, overtaking its capacity. The sun itself during the preceding days had yielded sway to torrential rains, and now rose up in brightness, drying the country roads, lending to every color a wondrous brilliancy and bringing cheer to every heart. Never had the far away country parish witnessed such an ecclesiastical assemblage wending its way to the sanctuary in pompous procession: a cleric¹⁰ and thirteen priests,¹¹ half of whom were in copes or dalmatics, preced-

⁷ Father Anthony Potini, a native of Velletri, where he was born in 1799, entered the Congregation of the Mission in January, 1816, and was sent to America while yet a scholastic in 1818, arriving at the "Barrens" January 5, 1819. Ordained to the priesthood on the Sunday before the feast of All Saints, 1820, he was sent during the spring of 1821 to take care of the parish of St. Joseph.

⁸ Father Joseph Rosti was born in the Diocese of Milan; Bishop Dubourg persuaded him to come to America with several others of his fellow-countrymen. He was one of the travelling companions of Mr. Anthony Potini. Soon after reaching the "Barrens," he sought admission into the Congregation, and while yet a novice was raised to the priesthood by Bishop Dubourg in October, 1821. After taking his vows (June 1, 1822), he was sent to Lower Louisiana.

⁹ "The church here is quite handsome; it is of brick, has two aisles besides the nave, divided by columns supporting the roof, and very beautifully ornamented." Rosati to Father Baccari, March 29, 1824.

¹⁰ Mr. Hermant, who shortly after went to the "Barrens" to pursue his studies.

¹¹ Bishop Rosati's *Diary* gives us their names: Fathers Bigeschi, Tichitoli, C.M., of the Assumption; Charles De la Croix, of St. Michael's; Anduze, of St. James; Brassac, of the Ascension; Potini, C.M., Rosti, C.M., of St. Joseph's; Millet, of St. Charles (Grand Coteau), Peyretti, of St. John the Evangelist's (Vermillionville, now La Fayette); Janvier, of New Orleans; Bernard De Devas; Sibourd, V. G.; Anthony de Sedella, O.M.C., of the Cathedral, New Orleans.

ing the Bishop-elect and the Diocesan prelate. The impressive ceremonial of episcopal consecration was carried out with stateliness and majesty, not a whit less solemn for the fact that two priests, Father Sibourd, V.G., and Father Anthony de Sedella, O.M.C., discharged the office of assistants to the consecrating prelate. Father Anduze, pastor of St. James, was the orator of the day; and we may well believe Bishop Rosati, himself a discriminating judge of pulpit oratory, when he says the sermon, which was most appropriate and eloquent, constituted a worthy crowning of the whole function.

And the new Bishop? What sentiments filled his soul at this august moment he himself tells us four days later in a letter written to his brother:

As for myself, I may honestly assure you that, overwhelmed as I was by the thought of a dignity surpassing my merits and of a burden much beyond my strength, I could do nothing else, during the ceremony of the Consecration, except humble myself and feel utterly confounded at the thought of my unworthiness. Still I take comfort in the consciousness that, far from desiring this dignity, I have done everything in my power to prevent its being bestowed upon me, and have consented to assume it only when those who are for me the organs of the will of God intimated that further refusals on my part would be of no avail. Anyhow, one of the shoals of the Episcopate I am safe from, being a Bishop in such a country as this: for here there are neither honors, comforts nor riches attached to the dignity—another motive urging me to imitate in my conduct the example of the Apostles, the office of whom I have been called to discharge. Recommend me, therefore, to the prayers of my friends and other pious souls whom you know.

It was Bishop Dubourg's desire that his Coadjutor should meet all the priests of the Diocese. Several had come to the consecration; but there were others whom duty and distances prevented from being present. Having, therefore, on the following Sunday inaugurated his episcopal functions in the church of the Ascension by administering the sacrament of confirmation to five persons, Bishop Rosati set out for his round of visits. By the means of his *Diary* we are able to follow him in this journey through Louisiana, first to Opelousas, the home of Fathers Cellini and Rossi, hence to New Orleans, where he arrived on Friday, April 9, *hora sesquioctava* p. m. On the tenth, after Mass, which he celebrated at the famous Ursuline

Convent, he called on Father Anthony de Sedella, and, on returning to the episcopal residence, found there assembled to tender him their respects and a hearty welcome the priests of the city: Fathers Sibourd, V.G., Moni, Jeanjean, Richard, Acquaroni, Portier, Janvier, Michaud and Bertrand.

Staunch friends of his as all these were, in their midst he felt there was an empty place; he sighed "for the touch of a vanished hand," "for the sound of a voice that *was* stilled,"— lamented Father Ferrari's. To the tomb of the zealous Canon, whom he had so much admired, revered and loved, he repaired on Good Friday afternoon, not so much perhaps to pray for the deceased, as to reflect upon the latter's self-sacrificing and truly apostolic spirit.

On Easter Sunday, April 28, he was celebrant at the Pontifical Mass in the Cathedral, and Bishop Dubourg preached the sermon. The celebration was, so to say, the installation of the Coadjutor, who left the following Saturday on his homeward trip.¹² Tarrying a while at St. Michael's and at Donaldsonville, he finally sailed for Missouri on the *Dolphin* on May 10, with Father Potini and Mr. Hermant, a Seminarian then on his way to the "Barrens."¹³

Ten days of uneventful travel brought the *Dolphin* to the Bois-Brulé Landing, some 12 miles from the Seminary; there Mr. Hermant disembarked and took care of the luggage, whilst the Bishop and Father Potini continued their journey to St. Louis, where they arrived May 20. From the rectory, where they were entertained a few hours by Fathers Niel, Audizio and Saulnier, the priests in charge of the parish and college, the two travellers started for St. Ferdinand. A warmer welcome they could not receive than that which was tendered them by Father Van Quickenborne, the Superior of the Jesuits' residence, and by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart under the saintly Mother Duchesne.

¹³ Apollinaire Hermant, born July 23, 1800, at Rodez (France), had been adopted into the Diocese by Bishop Dubourg; at the latter's request he left the "Barrens" in the following September, and went to Bardstown.

¹² "All the priests of this portion of the Diocese have shown me the greatest affection; and as for myself, I have experienced an extreme pleasure in getting acquainted with those whom I had not seen before, and in seeing again the others from whom I had been separated several years." Letter to Nicola Rosati, April 18, 1824.

The next morning, the Bishop and his companion, having breakfasted at Judge Mullanphy's, returned to St. Louis. "There I saw General Clarke (*sic*), presented him Bishop Dubourg's letter, and we had a long conversation on the subject of the missions among the Indians. Our meeting was most cordial; and since General Clarke (*sic*) enjoys great authority among the Indians, I hope he will not fail to favor and help the Missionaries."¹⁴

Bishop Rosati was anxious to get home. As he had nothing to keep him longer in St. Louis, and as there was a boat leaving the next day, he started back to the "Barrens," arriving at St. Genevieve in the afternoon of the twenty-third. An incident which happened at this juncture deserves mention, for the insight it affords into the simplicity of Bishop Rosati's character. "We found at St. Genevieve," writes the Bishop in his *Diary*, "Mr. Paquin, a cleric of our Congregation, whom Father de Nekere had sent to find out when we might be expected at the Seminary; for the Catholics of the parish had planned a solemn reception, and the men belonging to the militia wanted to come to meet us. On understanding the arrangement, I simply forbade Mr. Paquin to go ahead of us; and so we reached the Seminary together, unannounced, a little before midday."

Bishop Rosati, however, could not forbid his many friends of the parish to come to offer their congratulations, which they did on the morrow. But on the third day, he resumed quietly the even tenor of his life; his *Diary* for that day, May 26, contains this severely eloquent entry: "Mass in the chapel of the Nuns;¹⁵ heard their confessions in the morning, and gave them a conference. In the evening heard the Seminarians' confessions."

What was the position of the newly consecrated Coadjutor? The question need not be gone into at length here. Suffice these few indications.

Bishop Rosati, writing to his brother on December 6, 1823, the very same day he sent to Propaganda his reluctant acceptance of the Episcopacy, says: "I shall continue to reside at the Seminary, and to live in our Community, teaching my classes,

¹⁴ Rosati's *Diary*.

¹⁵ The Sisters of Loretto, who had a house, Bethlehem, a quarter of a mile from the Seminary.

etc. . . .” This, indeed, had been particularly stipulated, at the time of his appointment, between Propaganda and the Vicar General of the Congregation at Rome, as the latter advised him:

By virtue of an agreement entered into with Propaganda, you must remain Superior of the house and Seminary over there, and head of the whole Mission in America, with the ordinary powers of Visitor, or even of Vicar General, for all cases where there is no time to write to Rome and wait for an answer; and therefore you are empowered to appoint confrères to rule the houses with the title of Vice-Superiors.

This arrangement resulted naturally in that Bishop Dubourg, residing in New Orleans, had direct charge of the southern part of the Diocese, whereas the administration of the northern portion of it was allotted to the Coadjutor, under the high jurisdiction of the Ordinary.

That this was the *modus vivendi* agreed upon between the two prelates, just the first few words of the testimonial letter given by the Coadjutor to Father Niel, pastor of St. Louis, who was then leaving for Europe both to restore his health and get some material help for the Church of Upper Louisiana, will be sufficient evidence:

Joseph Rosati, of the Congregation of the Mission, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Bishop of Tenagra and Coadjutor of Monsignor Dubourg Bishop of New Orleans.

Whereas nearly all the missions and parishes established in the State of Missouri and in the neighboring States have been *entrusted in a special manner to our care*, etc.

A little over two years after his consecration, Bishop Rosati became practically the rule of the whole Diocese. How this came about is well known.

On Thursday, April 20, 1826, Bishop Dubourg, then on his way to Europe, arrived at the Seminary. A note in the Coadjutor's *Diary* informs us that:

Ep^{us} Neo-Aurelianensis extrema suae Dioceseos necessitate per-motus, incoep^ta perficere volens, atque nostrae Congⁿis fundationem in hisce regionibus stabilem reddere desiderans, in Europam iter aggredi decrevit, 1^o ut a Superiore Genli saltem duos Congⁿis Sacerdotes ad Superioris officium exercendum idoneos, 2^o ut ex Religionis propa-gationis amicis media ad Seminarii in Luisiana fundationem necessaria obtineat, etc., etc.¹⁶

¹⁶ Rosati's *Diary*, April 25, 1826.

This was all—or nearly all—that Bishop Rosati knew of the plan. He entertained Bishop Dubourg at the “Barrens” for three days, invited him to preach in the parish church on the Sunday, and, the Monday morning (April 24), accompanied him to St. Genevieve. Bishop Dubourg “reached St. Louis on the eve of Ascension Day, May 3, 1826. On the following day he preached; and immediately after Mass went to the steamboat—to which he would permit no one to accompany him—on his way to France.”¹⁷ From New York he wrote to his Coadjutor,¹⁸ and on the first of June sailed for Havre—never to return.

Meantime, at the request of the departing prelate, Bishop Rosati had gone down to Louisiana (May, 17), where the presence of a responsible person was needed. He returned home, July 19, just on time to celebrate the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, and still under the persuasion that he was merely Coadjutor of the Diocese. What was not, therefore, his surprise when, on October 5, he received from Father Niel intelligence of Bishop Dubourg’s resignation?

“On hearing this,” he wrote two weeks later to Father Baccari, “I was absolutely bewildered, and could not persuade myself it was true; because the conversations which I had with the prelate before he left here, and the letters which he wrote me before sailing made me expect something quite different from his resignation; accordingly I considered the report as absurd and a pure invention.”

He was all the more inclined to this view that, at the same time he received the information, it was appearing in the papers of New York, Charleston, St. Louis and New Orleans—in this last place with very disparaging comments. The information, nevertheless, was exact; and a few weeks later, on November 4, Bishop Rosati, who had gone to St. Louis for the consecration of Bishop Portier,¹⁹ received, in a letter of Cardinal De Somalia, Prefect of Propaganda, and in a Pontifical Brief, dated July 14, official notification that Bishop Dubourg’s resignation had been accepted, that Louisiana has been divided, and that he himself

¹⁷ SPALDING, *Life of Bishop Flaget*, p. 254. Louisville, 1852.

¹⁸ He had already written to him from St. Genevieve, after Bishop Rosati’s return to the “Barrens,” on April 27.

¹⁹ November 5, 1826.

has been appointed Administrator of the two Dioceses of New Orleans and St. Louis.

It might be asked here what were the causes which induced the Bishop of Louisiana to resign his See. Shea's verdict in this matter is unanimously accepted: "Discouraged at the difficulties which arose to thwart him, and confronted by bitter malevolence, he at last lost all heart and energy."²⁰ This is true, but incomplete. That indeed the old fractious spirit had not disappeared, many facts might be adduced to prove.²¹ "The very name of Dubourg," wrote Father Borgna on October 17, 1826, "has an irritating sound in the ears of a great portion of the inhabitants of this new Babylon. You cannot imagine all the abominations which fill the newspapers of this city."²² Even of the *sanior pars* of the clergy some had gradually become disaffected. The Bishop's preposterous proposal of Father Anthony de Sedella for Coadjutor had offended them. Neither could they help protesting against what they deemed a shocking disregard of propriety and blind partiality to smooth-tongued intriguers, when he recommended the wily Inglesi for the purple; nor were they to forget, if they forgave, the violent terms of the circular letter wherewith he had most unjustly lashed them, when they were simply trying to disillusion him. Again, several felt that, if the financial condition of the Diocese had become alarming, the remedy was not a wholesale multiplication of collections overtaxing the good will of priests and people alike, but rather more business-like methods of administration,²³ and, above all, less indulgence in the impracticable schemes of his too fertile and ever active fancy.²⁴ There were other difficulties, too; and in these difficulties the Coadjutor was involved; in consequence it will not be out of place to rehearse them here briefly. The two Bishops held opposite

²⁰ Vol. iii, p. 390. Cf. CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, Art. *New Orleans*, p. 11; HERBERMANN, *The Sulpicians in the United States*, pp. 179-180. New York, 1916.

²¹ That spirit was existing outside of New Orleans; as late as 1827, there was still at St. Michael's an *intrusus* whom Bishop Rosati declared himself unable to oust.

²² Letter quoted by SHEA, *l. c.*

²³ SHEA, *l. c.*

²⁴ These facts are gathered from a letter of Father Martial, New Orleans, July 13, 1822, *Arch. di Propag. Scrittura Referite nei Congressi*. Codice No. 7. *America Centrale*.

views on two points, namely, the opportuneness of the division at the appointed date, and the transfer of the Seminary from the "Barrens" to Louisiana. Whilst each was absolutely convinced of the justice of his contention, still the mutual friendliness of the two prelates never seemingly underwent any change, although it would appear that, towards the end, Bishop Dubourg's hyper-sensitiveness to contradiction made him somewhat reticent with his Coadjutor. It would seem that the division of the Diocese had never appealed very much to the Bishop. As the time appointed for its execution drew nearer, the Prelate became more restless. For, failing to realize the possibilities for Catholic development of Missouri and the neighboring territories, he called to Louisiana priests working in the North, and some who had gone South to renew their impaired health he retained. In the case of one of the priests of the Congregation thus disposed of in a manner contrary to right and to the contract, Bishop Rosati had even to remonstrate.

In 1825, Bishop Dubourg sent to the Pope a petition asking that the division be postponed for the time being. Bishop Rosati, on being requested to sign this document, at first demurred, firmly persuaded that the delay of the division was hurtful to the interests of the Church in Missouri. At length, however, Bishop Dubourg became so insistent that the Coadjutor, reluctantly and for no other motive, as he explained later, than the respect he professed for the Prelate, yielded to the latter's entreaties and signed the memoir. Never again was the subject mentioned again by either: for whilst Bishop Rosati's grief was extreme, he knew that Bishop Dubourg was so bent upon his scheme, that any doubting reference to its advisability would be unwelcome.

No less divergent, towards the close of the year 1825, were the views of the two prelates on the subject of the transfer of the Seminary. On this point, however, Bishop Rosati could be more outspoken, as he was responsible for the interests of his Congregation.

The question had grown gradually from a desire of certain priests in Louisiana to have a Seminary established in the South, yet without detriment to the one already existing at the "Barrens." As early as May, 1823, Father Cellini, C.M., then at Opelousas,

had broached the subject in a letter to Father Rosati; his ambitions were then limited to the foundation of a preparatory seminary for which, as he stated, Mrs. Charles Smith, the widow of the founder of the church of St. Charles at Grand Coteau, was ready to make the donation, under easy conditions, of a large tract of good land. At first, the offer looked fair to Father Rosati; on second thought, however, he revoked his acceptance; and although he was severely criticized at the time,²⁵ he soon had good reason to congratulate himself on the course he had pursued.

If the proposed new foundation was thus abandoned, its idea, nevertheless, remained in the air. At the time of Bishop Rosati's consecration, Bishop Dubourg opened his mind on the subject. In view of the coming division, Southern Louisiana should have its own Seminary: a donation of 1,000 acres of good land had already been secured; moreover, a zealous priest was offering \$4,000 for the erection of the buildings. Bishop Rosati went to see the place: he found the location "one of the most desirable in Louisiana," and, on returning home, reported the project very favorably to the Vicar General of the Congregation.²⁶

So far not a word had been said about suppressing the Seminary at the "Barrens": the plan was to have two Seminaries. But scarcely had a year elapsed when developments took an alarming turn. In the summer of 1825, Bishop Dubourg expressed the desire to see his Coadjutor and to talk with him *de gravissimis negotiis nostrae Congregationis et totius Dioecesis bonum spectantibus*.²⁷ Leaving, therefore, Missouri on July 22, Bishop Rosati met Bishop Dubourg at Assumption, La., on August 16. What were the *gravissima negotia* then treated, we learn from our oft-cited *Diary*:

The Bishop and I had a long and exhaustive talk on the business for which I had undertaken this journey. Moved by the grave difficulties besetting the progress of the Seminary at the "Barrens" on account of the latter's scanty income, and wishing to provide Lower Louisiana with

²⁵ Some of the priests of the Congregation wrote to Rome, accusing him of "neglect, if not ill-will" with regard to the interests of the Congregation in this affair.

²⁶ Letter to Father Baccari, July 14, 1824.

²⁷ *Diary*, July 22, 1825.

another Seminary of our Congregation, the Bishop spoke at length on the necessity of such a foundation, and asserted it would give great help to the churches and the Seminary in Missouri. His opinion was, therefore, that I should as soon as possible devote all my energies to this foundation; that I should leave at the "Barrens" one, or may be, two priests with the boys of the lower classes, and go with all the rest to Lower Louisiana and conduct the Seminary and College there to be built.

My soul was pierced to the quick at hearing this; and I represented to the eager prelate the dismal condition into which the Church of Missouri was to be plunged by this move, depriving it, as it would, of all spiritual help. But on his retorting with vehemence that my refusal to consent to this capital project was tantamount to bringing ruin upon the whole Diocese, I found it impossible to resist longer: I gave my consent, and have written to the Vicar General of our Congregation to obtain his approval.²⁸

Bishop Dubourg's new project, quite different from that agitated before, would have sounded the death-knell of the Seminary at the "Barrens"—that establishment which Pope Pius VII had declared to be of vital interest to the Church in Upper Louisiana.²⁹ At any rate, the half-hearted consent of Bishop Rosati soon caused him a great deal of anxiety; still this consent was not, and could not be final, since the matter had to wait the approval of higher authority. As often as he returned to the consideration of the subject, the more it seemed beset with difficulties; and he warned his Louisiana friends not to be oversanguine about it, and above all to show the utmost caution *ne Seminarium aere alieno gravetur antequam existere incipiat*.³⁰

On November 8, just as Bishop Rosati, then at St. John the Baptist's, La., had written to the Bishop of New Orleans, the latter arrived quite unexpectedly. The topic of the conversation of August 16 was, naturally, resumed:

I urged upon the Bishop the difficulties besetting the contemplated foundation; and after weighing them carefully, we concluded that it is of the utmost importance that, before anything be done, I should find out what our priests in Missouri think of the matter.³¹

Bishop Rosati lost no time in making the promised inquiry. He arrived at the "Barrens" on November 21. Four days later he

²⁸ *Diary*, August 16, 1825; the letter of Father Baccari is dated August 17.

²⁹ Brief of July 14, 1823.

³⁰ Letter to Father Bigeschi, November 5, 1825. *Diary*, same date.

³¹ *Diary*, November 8.

summoned to a council the priests of the Seminary: Fathers De Nekere, Dahmen, Permoli and Odin. The letter written the next day to Father Baccari rehearses most opportunely for us the progress of affairs since August 16:

After my first conversation with Bishop Dubourg at Assumption, we separated, he to visit the parish to Natchez, and I to go down to New Orleans, and wait there for an opportunity to return to the Seminary. On account of the excessive summer heat I had to delay longer than was anticipated, and I paid tribute to Louisiana by being sick two weeks. Meanwhile, speaking of the new foundation with Father Borgna and the other priests of the City, I began to doubt the feasibility of the project. To carry it out, the Bishop of New Orleans is reckoning on a subscription; now, according to the judgment of all these ecclesiastics, this subscription will not net much; nay more, it would be unwise to launch it, because, as subscriptions have already been resorted to this year to build two monasteries in Louisiana, another would be too much of an imposition on Catholic generosity.

When Bishop Dubourg came back from his Visitation, which produced much good, I laid before him my difficulties; whereupon he told me that, in order to make the foundation of the Seminary a success:

1. He intended to buy a house and a plantation, that is, cultivated land, adjacent to the uncultivated land which has been donated for the foundation of the Seminary: this purchase might be concluded by the immediate payment of \$3,000, and the obligation to pay a yearly life interest of \$1,200 to the owner, who is a man 74 years of age, but enjoying good health.

2. In order to have the funds necessary to build the College and furnish it, he would ask a loan from the State Bank; this establishment exacts an interest of 7 per cent and the annual payment of one-fifth of the principal.

3. To put in cultivation the land on which sugar-cane may be raised, he would enter into partnership with some one who would attend to the cultivation; the surplus realized over and above the expenses would be equally divided.

All this appeared to me very objectionable, and I communicated my misgivings to the Bishop, telling him that, before coming to any definite conclusions I would have to consult our priests on my return to the "Barrens."

Thanks be to God, after a steamboat trip of eleven days, I reached the Seminary on the 21st inst. I convened the Council, laid before them what has been explained above; and their observations were as follows:

1. It would be too dangerous for us to run so much into debt: crops are uncertain; we might expose ourselves to bankruptcy, and would be

forced to sell everything to the disgrace of the Congregation and Religion at large.

2. The number of our priests is too small to be divided into two houses; it will be difficult to find one capable of being Superior; this division will oblige us to withdraw the priests from the missions where they are now so fruitfully employed; again it would be unjust to do violence to the reasonable inclination these confrères have for the works of the holy ministry, if we were to compel them to spend the greater part of their lives in teaching reading, writing, spelling, etc.

3. It looks like downright injustice to abandon Upper Louisiana, that is to say, the State of Missouri, and practically to deprive of workers a country where there is such immense fruit to harvest.

4. Finally, we ought to write you about this whole affair, and wait for your answer.

Observations as just as the above cannot be wantonly disregarded. In consequence, I have written to Bishop Dubourg to wait a few more years before establishing this new Seminary: in the meantime we may come by the means and the subjects that will enable us to undertake the work without running into debt and ruining the house already established.³²

How Bishop Dubourg received this request for delay, we do not know. Letters from him were delivered to his Coadjutor on January 5 and February 23, 1826; but the *Diary* does not disclose their contents. At all events, long before receiving these letters Bishop Rosati had been worrying considerably. His return home in November had been anything but cheerful:

I have found every body in good health, but the affairs of the house in wretched shape: debts have been contracted: the provisions are exhausted, and the barns empty. Rain failed to come in due time; hence, the Indian corn was dried up and scorched before maturity; moreover, this summer's unprecedented intense heat burned up all harvests, and whatever grain could be saved and stored up was devoured by wheat-worms. We had to buy at once corn and wheat: hence, almost all the money which had been given me by priests of New Orleans, I have spent in buying a few necessities, and paying some of the outstanding debts. What I shall do after this, how I will be able to meet the necessary expenses, I know not. But *Tua, Pater, omnia Providentia gubernat*. This is my only gleam of hope. *In Domino speravi, non confundar*.³³

³² The *Diary* contains, indeed, on November 27, mention of a letter to Bishop Dubourg.

³³ Rosati's *Diary*, November 22, 1825.

What may have been the reflections of Bishop Rosati, amidst these dire straits, is not hard to surmise. Since the present distress was in his mind linked in some way to Bishop Dubourg's various projects, the gloom hovering over the former naturally cast its shadow on the latter. Surely this was no time to purchase property, to borrow money, and to plunge headlong into a doubtful venture. Then there appeared in the Bishop's whole scheme such a want of considerateness! For if the Seminary at the "Barrens" was, particularly just now, in distressing circumstances, was it not, after all, because of its doing the possible and the impossible for the Bishop and the Diocese? This is precisely what some self-appointed advisers had censoriously represented. What was to be done? On the one hand, to close the "Barrens" was to treat unjustly the Church in Missouri, and to give semblance of reason to the plea that this part of the Diocese was not worth bothering about. It meant, moreover, running hopelessly into debt;—on the other hand, to retain the Seminary, though at the cost of privations, and to do the right thing by the Catholics of Upper Louisiana, was to incur the Bishop's displeasure and appear ungrateful. The more Bishop Rosati weighed the alternative, the more firmly convinced he became that Bishop Dubourg's plan was ill-advised. Still he would not trust his own judgment; and as he thought of none more prudent, more unbiased and, at the same time, more conversant with the existing conditions, than Bishop Flaget and his Coadjutor, Bishop David, he accordingly laid the whole matter before them, ready to acquiesce.

The two prelates examined the affair with the attention it deserved; and so strong was their conviction that Bishop Rosati's demur was well-founded, and that something must be done at once to relieve his unbearable position, that the Bishop of Bardstown resolved to write without delay to Father Baccari. This he did on January 1, 1826. After explaining Bishop Dubourg's project to do away with the Seminary at the "Barrens," and to establish a new one in Lower Louisiana, and rehearsing the wrong done by the Bishop in calling South some of the priests of Upper Louisiana, Bishop Flaget thus concludes:

1. My Coadjutor and I firmly believe it is not only expedient, but urgent, to make the division: because, until it is made, all the zeal and talents of Bishop Rosati are kept, as it were, in concealment; and

for this cause, the time-limit stated in the Bull for the division ought not to be extended.

2. Our firm conviction is, that the projects explained by Bishop Dubourg to Bishop Rosati are prejudicial in every respect. If, indeed, the transfer of the Seminary takes place, the blow will be fatal to Religion in Upper Louisiana, entailing a loss that cannot be easily repaired.

3. We are convinced, moreover, that the project is fraught with danger, because it involves the contracting of debts without any hope of being able to meet them. Furthermore, we believe it necessary that the division should be made as soon as possible, so that Bishop Rosati may have the right to call back such clergymen as he may deem fit to help him in his administration. This recall will have, of course, to be made with prudence; but it is absolutely imperative.

This is our conclusion, grounded principally on the perfect knowledge we have of Bishop Dubourg. When Father Martial, V.G., arrives in Rome, you may get more information touching Bishop Rosati's situation, which will enable you to take prompt measures to extricate him from his painful position.

Bishop Dubourg could not be long kept in ignorance of this formal disapproval of his various designs. The moment that he learnt it must have been one of bitter disappointment: his endeavor to have the division delayed was criticized, his administration was found fault with, his projects were denounced as unsound and harmful—and that, by his best friends, by Bishop Flaget in particular! A few months before, the Bishop of Bardstown and he had already been at variance on the subject of certain episcopal nominations;³⁴ but the present difference was far more serious. The shock, we may well believe, exasperated the smarting pain caused by the manifold difficulties besetting him at home. He must have felt it all the more keenly since the constant strain wrought by these troubles upon his West Indies Creole sensitiveness had undermined his health. In this disheartening mental and physical condition, his long broodings over what he considered a total misunderstanding of his actions and intentions gradually overcast his mind with unfair suspicions, to which he, at length, gave vent in a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, describing the “persecution” which he suffered from his clergy, and ending by a request to accept his resignation (February 27, 1826). His resolution to go to Europe

³⁴ SPALDING, *Sketches*, p. 253.

was a logical consequence of this first step. What would his jaded sensibility have not suffered, had he seen the letter written to Propaganda just a few days after his departure from America, by Archbishop Maréchal, yet a staunch friend of his?

Certior factus sum RR. Dubourg Novae Aureliae Epum prima die praesentis mensis vela secreto dedisse e portu Neoeboracensi, intendens directe Roman adire. Quibusnam motivis ductus tam longum iter suscepit? Certe nescio. Cum tamen rumores vagentur, qui probabilitate non destituuntur, mihi officium incumbit submittendi S. Congni. quasdam observationes, ne videlicet decepta *romanticis* coloribus quibus iste Praelatus sua schemata adornat, aliquid decernere inducatur prosperitati Religionis nocivum. . . .³⁵

On landing at Havre, on July 3, Bishop Dubourg notified the Secretary of Propaganda of his arrival in Europe, once more begging that his resignation be accepted. The matter was already settled, as we learn from the minutes of the meeting of Propaganda held on June 26, and approved by Leo XII on July 2.

When the first news reached New Orleans, it gratified foes and friends alike: to the former it meant "good riddance"; to the latter the solution of a well nigh inextricable situation. "No one expected this change," wrote Father Borgna in a letter already quoted, "yet all who know that most worthy Prelate praise his resolve and rejoice to hear it. It was time to put an end to his sufferings; and just, above all, that in the decline of his life he may enjoy a little peace and repose."

As soon as Bishop Rosati received the Pontifical Brief of July 14, 1826, he informed all the pastors of Bishop Dubourg's resignation and of the division of the Diocese by the following letter:³⁶

St. Louis, November 6, 1826.

Reverend dear Sir:

You may have been wondering why I remained silent whilst several newspapers in the United States announced that Bishop Dubourg had resigned his See. But I could take no step before receiving reliable information about a report which I had every reason to disbelieve, until I had official notification of it. My doubts in the matter ceased only

³⁵ *Arch. di Propag. Scritture Referite nei Congressi.* Codice No. 8. This letter is dated Baltimore, June 4, 1826.

³⁶ The original is in French. *Copiae Litterarum et Documentorum officialium a Rmo Josepho Rosati Epo.* Archives of the St. Louis Diocese.

yesterday. Two briefs wherewith His Holiness has honored me confirm most unfortunately the rumor which for several weeks has caused me very painful anxiety. Bishop Dubourg has actually resigned, and his resignation has been accepted. The former Diocese of New Orleans, as Pius VII, of holy memory, had decided by the brief of my election as Coadjutor of the same Diocese, has just been divided: the one part including the States of Louisiana and Mississippi, and the other the State of Missouri and the adjacent territories. The See of the one shall be New Orleans; and of the other, St. Louis. The Holy Father has entrusted to me, until further orders, the care of them both and grants me the necessary faculties.

You will certainly share in my regrets for the departure of the illustrious Prelate to whom the Diocese owes its priests, its colleges, its monasteries, its Seminary, in a word, all the good done in it since Divine Providence had confided it to him. I hope likewise that your zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls will press you to obtain from the supreme Pastor of our souls, by your fervent prayers and those of your parishioners, the graces necessary for those on whom this tremendous burden will eventually be imposed.

I am sincerely, etc.

Whilst the announcement of the division was gratifying news to Bishop Rosati, the prospect of going to New Orleans filled him with apprehension. True, Leo XII did not strictly command his choice; yet to a "child of obedience" a mere wish of authority is law; and the Pope's wish in the matter was so worded, his appeal to the prelate's zeal so earnest, that the voice of personal likes and dislikes should simply be stifled.

However, there was here more than a question of personal likes and dislikes: before God and his conscience, Bishop Rosati was persuaded of his unfitness for the See of New Orleans. The welfare of that Church was consequently at stake. His sense of obedience, on the one hand, and, on the other, the consciousness of his unfitness and of the interests of the Church, plunged him once more in a great perplexity. Like the year before, he thought of turning for counsel to his trusted friends of Bardstown; but as he wished to have with them a candid and complete discussion of the case, he dismissed the idea of a letter, and determined to go to Kentucky.

He could not, however, start at once: his parochial duties at the "Barrens" prevented. The exercises of the Jubilee had been announced for the first two weeks of Advent (December 3 to 17);

moreover, he intended to lay the corner-stone of the new parish church on December 26, and severe weather delayed the latter ceremony until January 1. Severe weather delayed, likewise, his departure for a few days. This enforced leisure he availed himself of to explain to Father Baccari the reasons which, according to his judgment, militated against his accepting New Orleans. Here is part of his letter dated January 6, 1827³⁷:

My motives are the following:

I am now perfectly inured to the climate of Missouri, whereas that of Louisiana does not agree with me, as I have experience in my various trips there: as I am now rather stout, the excessive heat prevailing there is so hard on me, that I am then unable to study or apply myself to anything; and, moreover, it occasions me great inconvenience.

New Orleans is a large city, the population of which is for the most part made up of unbelievers and other enemies of Religion. There is needed there a man capable of speaking the language eloquently, so as to impose respect for the Word of God, and not expose it to the danger of being scoffed at in the newspapers by such as go to listen to the preacher *ut capiant eum in sermone*. Now I have not the talent requisite for a ministry so important and, in that city, so difficult. On the other hand, in Missouri people are more religious, they come to church with upright intentions, and, on that account, no such bad effects are to be feared as in New Orleans, and some good is actually done.

Moreover, all here know and esteem me.

Word came on the morning of Sunday, January 7, that it seemed possible to cross over to Illinois. Accordingly, early in the afternoon Bishop Rosati, together with Brother Blanka, who was to accompany him on the journey, started for St. Genevieve. Father Dahmen decided to go along; and crossing the Mississippi River with extreme difficulty on Tuesday, the three travellers set out on their three hundred mile trip. The Bishop's *Diary* enables us to trace every step of this journey most difficult and trying during that particularly severe winter. Suffice it to mention here their Sunday stop (January 14) at Union County, with Father Durbin and the Kentucky Sisters of Charity, to whom the Bishop promised a painting of their Patron Saint. On the following Friday, January 19, at 3 p. m., they arrived at Bardstown. "There," writes Bishop Rosati, "we were welcomed most cordially by the Bishops of Bardstown and of Mauricastrum,

³⁷ *Archives of the Proc. Gen. C. M.*, Rome. *America*, P. II. Monsignor Rosati, p. 51.

and by all the clergy, viz., Fathers Derigaud, Cellini, Elder, Reynolds, Foucher, Evremont, Kenrick, Cooms jun. and Cissel."

The Cathedral, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, St. Thomas Seminary, Loretto, all these hallowed spots which, eight years before, they had learnt to know and to love, were visited in company with their episcopal hosts. In the intervals, particularly on January 26, the three Prelates had long and earnest conferences on the subject so near to Bishop Rosati's heart. The conclusion was that his motives to decline the See of New Orleans were adjudged *maximi momenti* by his two friends, who decided to write to Rome to this effect.³⁸

Nothing further detained the Missouri pilgrims, and they started, without delay, their homeward journey. Toilsome and dangerous as had been the route they came by, it was now even more perilous on account of persistent bad weather: accordingly they decided to return by way of Vincennes. At Nazareth, on January 29, they took leave of Bishop David; and at Bethany, two days later,³⁹ of Bishop Flaget. Here it was that took place the touching scene described by Archbishop Spalding, so characteristic of the faith, humility and child-like simplicity and candor of the two prelates. "So deeply," says the historian, "was Bishop Rosati impressed with the sanctity of his revered friend, that on taking his leave he fell on his knees, and refused to arise until he would receive a blessing. Bishop Flaget, taken by surprise, on the impulse of the moment imitated the example of the other prelate; and the scene closed with a mutual benediction imparted to each other, and a parting embrace."⁴⁰

The return journey, though on the whole as fatiguing as the trip eastward⁴¹—at every line of the *Diary* we read but of very cold weather, heavy snow, ice, overflowing rivers, etc.,—was interrupted by a four days rest at Vincennes, the first scene of Father Dahmen's missionary activity. At length, on February 20, they were back at St. Genevieve; and on the twenty-second,

³⁸ Rosati's *Diary*, January 26, 1827.

³⁹ Bishop Flaget would not let them go on January 30, "timens ne ob pluviam quae nocte praecedenti abundanter ceciderat fluvii qui trajiciendi sunt aquis redundantes impedimento essent." *Diary*.

⁴⁰ *Sketches, etc.*, p. 261.

⁴¹ Brother Blanka came near being drowned on the fourth day.

in company with venerable Father Donatian Olivier, who was going to the Seminary to spend in retirement the sunset of his laborious days, Bishop Rosati and Brother Blanka arrived at the "Barrens."

The two Kentucky prelates had advised addressing to the Pope a memoir in which the administrator should set forth his arguments. But scarcely had Bishop Rosati returned home, when he was compelled to undertake another journey, this time to Louisiana.⁴² There the memoir, also recommended by Bishop Portier,⁴³ was written, and sent through Father Baccari, who was urged to support its conclusions:

I pray you to go in person to present this memoir to the Pope, and to impress upon him that sending me to New Orleans would spell the ruin of our community in this country; that, moreover, I could not last long, both on account of the climate which does not at all agree with me,⁴⁴ and by reason of the anguish which will shortly befall me in a place where I can do no good, and even may run the risk of losing my own soul. Finally please explain to the Pope that even though I have done no good here in America, still I have constantly desired eagerly to do as much as my poor strength permits me; and that I ask for no other favor than to be left here, where I hope to be able to do some little good, and where I prefer to continue to eat cornbread and suffer all kinds of privations, rather than to enjoy every comfort in Louisiana.

The last lines of this letter contain a touching and dramatic entreaty:

If they insist on compelling me, I will go and throw myself at the feet of the Holy Father, and ask leave to go back to one of our houses in Italy and be employed in some of our functions. Ah! a person realizes the price and value of this our holy vocation only when he is not in condition to profit by all its advantages!

Nor was it to Father Baccari alone he had recourse to plead his cause at Rome. He besought Bishop Dubourg also to interpose in his favor; which the prelate did, in fact, in a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda in date of May 1, 1827.

Leo XII was moved by all these pleas. A Pontifical Brief was sent, May 20, whereby Bishop Rosati was appointed to the

⁴² Departing from the Seminary on March 1, and from St. Genevieve on the third, he was in New Orleans the eighth of the same month.

⁴³ Letter received by Bishop Rosati March 9.

⁴⁴ On reaching New Orleans he had again a spell of sickness. *Diary*.

See of St. Louis, with, however, the duty to look after the Diocese of New Orleans as Administrator, until the appointment of a Bishop; he was requested, in consequence, to submit the name of a suitable candidate.

The brief was delivered at the "Barrens" on July 12,⁴⁵ At the sight of this document relieving him of his long anxiety, Bishop Rosati wrote in his *Diary*:

Per publicum tabellionem accepi . . . 4^o Breve SS.D.N. Leonis Pp. XII quo me ex Episcopatu Tenagrensi ad Sanctiludovicensem transfert, relicta etiam mihi administratione Dioecesis Neo-Aurelianensis usque dum. . . . Deo gratias. *Ipse mortificat et vivificat.*

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⁴⁵ Bishop Rosati appointed Father de Neckere, C.M., his Vicar General for New Orleans, and recommended him to Rome as Bishop for that See. Bishop de Neckere was consecrated in 1830, and died September 5, 1833.